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March 1, 2012

### Re: SUPPORT of HB 5184, AAC Dissection Choice

Dear Honorable Members of the Select Committee on Children (Sen. Gerratana, Rep. Urban, Sen. Musto, Rep. Fawcett, Sen. Suzio, Rep. Wood, Rep. Betts, Rep. Candelaria, Rep. Mushinsky, Rep. Rebimbas, Rep. Rose, and Rep. Thompson),

On behalf of the greater than 165,000 Connecticut-based supporters of The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), please accept this testimony in **SUPPORT of HB 5184, AAC Dissection Choice**.

Dissection choice provides students with the opportunity to participate in high quality biology education activities without participating in instructional methods that involve the killing of animals.

A significant and growing proportion of students at all educational levels have objections—ethical, religious, and otherwise—to harming animals for learning activities. Research shows that students may be unable to learn new information when they feel forced to participate in, or watch their peers participate in, activities that harm animals. Some students are even dissuaded from pursuing careers in science.

Dissection choice legislation will help create a more inclusive learning environment, guarantee that students will be provided with meaningful alternative assignments, and ensure that students will not be punished for their ethical or religious beliefs.

Alternatives to dissection (e.g., computer programs, DVDs, lifelike models) have been shown to teach anatomy and biology as well as or better than traditional animal-based lessons, offering enhanced potential for the customization and repeatability of learning exercises. Dozens of comparative studies have demonstrated that students who choose alternative methods perform as well as or better than students who dissect animals.

High school dissection activities are not a prerequisite for any veterinary or medical school. The overwhelming majority (>90%) of medical schools (including Harvard, Yale, Columbia, and Stanford) have eliminated use of animals in teaching. Computer-based methods and anatomical simulators are being used for teaching everything from basic physiology to hands-on trauma care and even microsurgical techniques.

In terms of the benefits to educators, studies have shown that alternative methods are more time and cost efficient in general than animal-based teaching methods: They require less set-up time and less clean-up time for teachers, and cost thousands of dollars less than animal specimens (some are web-based and available for free), last for years, and do not need to be re-ordered for each incoming class.

In 2008, the National Science Teachers Association amended its official position statement to acknowledge the educational efficacy of non-animal replacements for dissection. The National Association of Biology Teachers also encourages educators to be receptive to students' objections to harming animals and to provide them with alternative assignments in place of dissection when requested.

Currently, 15 states have laws or policies allowing K-12 students to opt-out of dissection and other animal-based classroom exercises, including Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, Maine, Vermont, and New Jersey.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Annie Hornish', with a stylized, flowing script.

Maryanne "Annie" Hornish  
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